

Shangwe music for spiritual rituals: A symbolical enactment.

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Abstract

Anthropological scholars have discussed various myths. The *Shangwe* community is a 'web' of mythological symbols that are orally active but without documentation. It was intention of this ethnography to explore cultural and biblical symbols embedded in the *Shangwe* mythology in *Gokwe* North District in the Midlands Province in Zimbabwe. The results revealed that *Nevana* sanctified hut housed mythic snakes of various colours and lengths. Only five people had the traditional authorisation to enter the hut using the western door, just as there are five virgins in the Bible. Chiefs, just like the wise men who came from the east in search of the newly born Jesus, have the religious right to sit next to the eastern door which is ever closed. A certain man had the traditional role to stop the rain when it was too much to sustain plant growth. Some of the myths are comparable with certain songs of the *Shangwe* and other cultures. Folktales and song texts reflect cultural heritage. The objectives of this article were two-fold. First, it sought to identify, compare, and discuss traditional and biblical symbolism embedded in four *Shangwe* myths. Second, it intended to examine song texts connected to certain *Shangwe* mythology.

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Indigenous knowledge systems and the conservation of natural resources in the Shangwe community in Gokwe District, Zimbabwe.

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Abstract

The dwindling of wild animal species and vegetation is a common feature in the African continent let alone in the world at large. The paper investigated the *Shangwe* religious and cultural practices which are meant to save the extinction of vegetation and particular animals in the then Gokwe District in the Midlands Province in Zimbabwe. Most importantly, these practices were linked to *Nevana*, the *Shangwe* rain making god. It emerged from the study that snakes symbolised the ancestral beings. Consequently, it was taboo for the *Shangwe* to kill them. The belief in these symbolic snakes was a favourable factor which necessitated their annual increase in numbers. The study established that certain sacred hills were places of abode for gods and spirits. Also, echoes of music and dance used to be heard on the following day after *mukwerera* rainmaking performances. Furthermore, it was found out that the community members were culturally not allowed to fell trees from these sanctified hills and they [hills] grew into thick forests. Thus the *Shangwe* indigenous knowledge system was utilised not only to protect wild animals and deforestation; it was a tool that intensively combated soil erosion as well.

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